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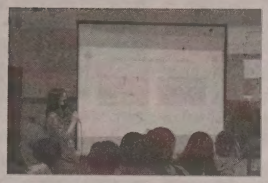
LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969



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Volume LXV Issue III — March 2023

LHS Teacher Contract Negotiation Updates

Katie Lin
Nikki Prasad
Staff Writers

Contract negotiations are still ongoing at Lexington High School. Typically, teachers sign updated contracts every three years, however, many have been working under expired contracts for over 150 days.

"We have contracts going back to the early 1970s. [In] one of them, women would get fired if they got pregnant. There was an entire paragraph about getting pregnant in one of them. So situations change; that's not our world anymore," Dr. Avon Lewis, president of the Lexington Education Association, said.

A critical issue teachers face is inadequate compensation, which has only exacerbated due to the recent rising inflation.

"Eggs have doubled in price since pre-COVID, and my salary has gone up 1% since pre-COVID, so that means that people are asking me to eat less eggs–that's kind of my analogy," Beckie Bray Rankin, a French teacher at LHS, said.

Unfortunately, the town has not addressed teachers' needs. As such, many are fighting for their rights to be recognized and prioritized.

"The town is very interested in saving money for building a new high school," Dr. Lewis said. "They're just putting the money in a savings account and not spending it on the operations of what the town needs right now."

Recently, teachers received an update allowing them to apply for extra days off if a family member contracts COVID. However, this update presents its own challenges concerning equity.

"A lot of the [updates] are for parents. A big one this year is parental leave, which I believe we should have, but in a year where we're not getting anything, maybe this is not the year to go after that. …I'd like them to have a more equitable practice–could everyone every three years apply for a leave where you get 60% of your salary", Rankin said.

Rankin has suggested "Worksheet Wednesdays" where teachers take Wednesdays off, and "Work to Rule," which limits teachers' work to the in-school hours they are paid for.

Other districts that have successfully addressed teacher contract negotiations indicate that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

"We've heard rumors about a district that got [an] 8% [wage increase], which is what the economy has gone up by, so that should be kind of the baseline. If they were actually giving us a raise, it would be above that. But the district at one point said 3% but then they went back to 2%," Rankin said.

Despite these difficulties, speaking out has garnered lots of support from parents and students, which has helped the situation.

Teachers hold signs in support of the ongoing contract negotiations at a before-school rally.
Photo courtesy of the LEA Instagram page

"Right now a lot of staff are feeling fairly demoralized. Trying really hard and not necessarily feeling like we're making progress. But when you can take back some of that narrative, that really has a big impact on people," Dr. Lewis said.

In upcoming months, LHS teachers and community members alike hope to continue the fight for teacher's rights within the LPS school district.

Reflections on Anti-Semitism with a Holocaust Survivor

Allison Liu
Emily Wu
Staff Writers

Helene Bargheer, a junior at Lexington High School, recently interviewed a Holocaust survivor for her class Facing History and Ourselves: The Holocaust and Other Genocides.

In the project, students selected a genocide and endeavored to understand the human experience of genocide beyond the information presented in history books.

"When we don't just regurgitate information, it helps us understand that genocide on such a deeper personal level, realizing that this action that's done at a state and international level, causes people's lives to be drastically different," Jessica Antoline, the instructor of the course, said.

The idea behind the project was born a few years back when Antoline connected with Hanni, a Holocaust survivor from Austria. Last year, Antoline used her connection to help Bargheer conduct an interview with Hanni.

As a native German, Bargheer could culturally connect with Hanni.

"[Hanni's] an amazing person … She's 92 now and has all these things going on. And she went hiking in the Himalayas and Mount Everest when she was 82. I definitely learned more about the Austrian perspective," Bargheer said.

Additionally, this interview provided insight into the generalization of religion and the complexities that fueled extremism during the Holocaust.

"Certain things that were really interesting to me was how [Hanni] dealt with her [own] relationship to Judaism, because she told me she wasn't really religious, her family in general, and how [she] felt to be put in the spot: 'Okay, you're Jewish and people want to kill you', but you don't even feel Jewish," Bargheer said.

Overall, Bargheer described her experience as meaningful because while she grew up in Germany, she had never met a Holocaust survivor.

"Being German, I think the Holocaust is always really present in Germany, and there is a responsibility to ensure that nothing like this will ever happen again," Bargheer said.

In addition to discussing the Holocaust, Helene asked insightful questions regarding Hanni's thoughts on antisemitism and the unfair treatment of Jews in the present day.

"My last question [of my interview with Hanni] was, what advice would you give young people, and one of the things she said is just, 'don't live with prejudice' … because you can never put people in one box," Bargheer said.

Antoline and Bargheer believe that people, especially young students, should be aware of the dangers of antisemitism and how it manifests within our communities.

"I think one of the most important things to know is that antisemitism is like a virus … It can change forms very, very quickly … We have to be really vigilant about how we document those new ways it's appearing. We address that with young audiences and really help them interact with how it has changed forms and how they can really see it ingrained in all aspects of society around them," Antoline said.

Ida's Insights: Lunch Bell Loonacy

■ Ida Sjodin
Columnist

It has been a mystery to many, both students and teachers, what the true meaning of the lunch bells are. Some say that the first bells mark the start of lunch, while some say that students should wait until the second bell. The mystery surrounding the meaning of these lunch bells has caused a lot of conflict between students and teachers, especially since many of us are let to lunch five minutes later than everyone else.

Strangely, this issue seems to have hit the math building especially hard. It seems that a lot of math teachers have been told that the second bell is when students should be let out to lunch. This, along with the fact that math is the farthest from the main building, means that math students are always late to lunch.

When we are let out on the second bell, my classmates and I are always at the end of the line or eating the options left behind. The easily accessible foods like the pizza and salad bar options run low after those five minutes, and the line for the hot lunch often stretches beyond the registers. It's not very appealing to stand in that line, especially when you're already late for lunch.

The lunch bells themselves don't need to be changed. They are very convenient compared to the systems used in other schools (especially the middle schools). But when no one really knows what they mean, no one can use the bells correctly. Maybe a clarifying PA announcement would fix this problem, but this depends on which lunch bell ends up being for the students going to lunch. I think that some teachers might still let us out five minutes early, which is why I think that the second bell should only mark the end of passing time, and people going to lunch should leave on the first bell.

When we have first lunch, we don't go to our classrooms, wait a few minutes for the second bell, then leave. So why wouldn't this also apply to the later lunches? Not to mention, there are many more people in the hallways before first lunch, since all of the students are moving to their next class, so it's not a "too many people" problem. Sure, everyone isn't concentrated around the lunch areas, but there are around three times as many students moving after the bell to first lunch.

I always dread the days when I know that I will be late for lunch. And when I get there, I see the lunch at the front of the line snaking out of the kitchen area as someone grabs the last slice of pepperoni pizza. If everyone is told to leave on the first bell, we would have more time to eat, and a shot at being closer to the front of lunch lines. This would increase the fairness of the current system of lunches, and leave a lot more students satisfied.

Talia's Thoughts: LPS' Response to the Threat of Climate Change

■ Talia Alperin
Columnist

Lexington High School has recently installed solar panels in all parts of its buildings, another action our school has taken to address the threat of climate change. The threat of climate change gives a false impression that we are doomed, but it's important to realize that many solutions are underway, which require everyone to take action. LHS and Lexington Public Schools have already begun to play a role in saving the environment.

When I was younger, I was obsessed with saving the environment and protecting endangered species, so much so that it got a bit excessive. I've cooled down now, but my concern for the environment remains. Learning about climate change during my freshman year was harrowing. Our teacher showed us videos about what would happen if the temperature of the earth kept rising. The impacts are jarring – from melting ice caps to coral reef die-offs to the increased prevalence of disease – it makes my spine shiver. Climate change will threaten public safety and health, weaken the economy, and destroy biodiversity.

Solutions to problems as large and complex as climate change require a multi-pronged approach. It's much cheaper for businesses to mass-manufacture goods, which often harms the environment. Nevertheless, businesses, while powerful, are also at the mercy of consumer demand. With the exception of certain monopolies, the current market leaves room for consumer choice. This lets individuals, like us, support climate change by increasing demand for eco-friendly goods and environmentally friendly institutions.

For many years now, LPS has been part of the solution. In 6th and 7th grade, I was a member of the Green Team at Clarke Middle School. I attended WIN meetings and sorted trash at lunch as a part of the "Slash the Trash" program. You may notice a group of Green Team volunteers doing the same thing at LHS. Being a member of the Green Team was a highlight of my experience at Clarke. I was a passionate kid making new friends and being surrounded by like-minded people who were dedicated to caring for the environment. The work of Green Teams alone, such as those at Clarke and LHS, saves tons of waste from being dumped into landfills. Demanding that more local institutions do the same and supporting companies that try to reduce their waste magnify this impact. Another way to start is by composting at home. The Town of Lexington offers composting services; all you have to do is store your food waste somewhere (my family stores it underneath the sink so it doesn't stink up the kitchen) and every week, someone will come by to grab your food waste. The organic material will then get decomposed into fresh soil.

Reflecting back on my experiences at Clarke also reminds me of my drama teacher's "Rubbish to Runway" gallery walk. Every year, my teacher would ask students to design garments out of disposed materials. Things that were thrown aside were repurposed into clothing for a gallery walk, of which the proceeds went to charity. A couple days ago, I saw an ad for a suitcase made out of recycled water bottles. It blew my mind. With advances in technology, such feats are becoming more and more attainable. Aside from being cool and trendy, like the garments made for my teacher's gallery walk, buying items made from recycled material is a much more environmentally friendly alternative.

In our local communities we can each contribute to our part. Local clubs such as Envirothon and LEAF are working to advocate for environmental protection. The solar panels on our school's roof are just one part of the solution. LHS has begun to play its role in protecting the environment. Now, I'm asking you to do the same.

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Examining the A vs. A+ Policy and Grading Standards

Angela Shi
Maya Bhandarkar
Staff Writers

Fueled by Lexington High School's competitive culture, even the typical straight-A student may not feel satisfied with their report card. The coveted "+" drives already academically successful students to push for unnecessary levels of perfectionism and sparks controversy surrounding inconsistent grading techniques among teachers.

The head of the English Department, Jane Day, has emphasized how an A+ can be anxiety-provoking for students.

"I think the A+ sets an unhealthy high bar that students and families think is an absolute," Day said. "Having the A+ serves to create a focus on numbers, rather than create a deeper understanding of one's learning path."

Kerry Dunne, the head of the Social Studies Department, also believes that the A vs. A+ policy is counterproductive.

"I have never seen a college that offers an A+ on the transcript. I have taught at Boston College, Boston University, and Framingham State University, and the highest grade at all three institutions is an A. We are preparing most of our students to attend institutions of higher learning, and having a grade scale that resembles what they will experience there makes sense to me," Dunne said.

However, some students have the opposite view on this issue: they believe that the A vs. A+ policy is preferential. Sophomore Kaavya Moogala shared her perspective on this matter.

"The idea behind it is that it lessens the stress between getting a full A+, but it creates more stress because why did I work this hard and not get an A+? It lessens the effort people put into something, so why bother? It depends on the person," Moogala said.

While striving for an A+ is a pressure that all Lexington students may face, there have been inequities, for example, where different teachers in the same department and level have different grading standards for their students. This issue has left students and teachers with contrasting perspectives.

Lisa Olaharski, a biology teacher, enjoys the fact that she has the freedom to use her own methods of teaching and grading.

"I can only speak for myself as a Biology teacher. I think there should be similar learning objectives, some key labs or experiments, but there should be room for teachers to be creative and choose different ways in which to assess their students. I am a better teacher because of my collaboration with other teachers to develop lessons and rubrics, but I also like to have my own spin on things," Olaharski said.

Recently, the English department has standardized their grading systems on Aspen, which Day believes has benefited students.

"More than in years past, we've aligned grading practices across a course or grade level so that everyone in a course is using the same Aspen calculation - either total points or category averages … to help create a more consistent student experience," Day said.

Other departments have also undergone efforts to make grading consistent among teachers.

"I am fine with teachers using different grading systems as long as they are transparent and clearly communicated to students…We all follow the same state standards for history/social studies… I think this helps to ensure students have a reasonably equitable experience across different teachers of the same course," Dunne said.

However, some students believe grading methods can be further refined.

"I feel like there are a lot of disparities in the way that different teachers grade, especially teachers who teach honors [courses] vs. non-honors [courses]. Some honors teachers use their rubrics from their non-honors courses to grade honors courses," Bodepudi said.

Similarly, Moogala believes differences in grading among classes of the same course occur at LHS, often harming students.

"I know some teachers use their own rubrics based on what they taught in class…but sometimes they can make it unfair to students and can be very picky. It is not their purpose but it is harder on students. If someone has friends who are taking the same course but they have a teacher that is harder, it can make them feel bad for getting a lower grade," Moogala said.

On the whole, the grading system at LHS can be unfair based on the A vs. A+ policy and the different grading standards that teachers use in the same courses. Teachers and department heads may believe that an A+ grade creates excessive anxiety, but most students reject this idea and believe that having an A as the highest grade hinders them from achieving more. Although teachers have tried to make grading fair among students, more is needed.

The Downfalls of ChatGPT

Annie Wang
Tara Pai
Staff Writers

In Nov. 2022, OpenAI (an artificial intelligence research and development company) released a new artificial intelligence-powered chatbot, ChatGPT. Since then, the service has gained popularity, even among students at Lexington High School. Though AI has a set of benefits, it likely enforces more harm than good.

The site can provide many benefits when it comes to academic work.

"It is a great addition to what the teacher teaches in class, as if the student has questions about what was taught or wants more information about the topic, they can get immediate answers from the AI," Raymond Hang, a freshman, said.

The chatbot has various uses for students.

"Students use it to prepare for tests, ask questions looking for information," Hang said. "[It's] a convenient tool to check understanding and gain new insight and ideas into existing issues."

But along with these benefits come a number of downsides. As ChatGPT is a highly accessible and advanced platform, it can easily be misused. One concern is that students may use ChatGPT to complete essays and homework, which harms their critical reasoning and analytical skills.

"We need to understand how to write because that's how we learn how to formulate our thoughts, to structure our lives, … and to analyze the world around us," Alexa Muse, an English teacher at LHS, said. "If we're never learning writing skills, we aren't able to do those things and it leads to some very dangerous outcomes, very real life outcomes."

Teachers have begun to recognize some downfalls of ChatGPT. Many of these problems are related to cheating or using chatbox answers for homework.

"At the end of the day, we teach the things that we teach not as pointless skills, but because they create agency in students and stronger people. When we see them being taken away, it's very concerning for us as teachers," Muse said.

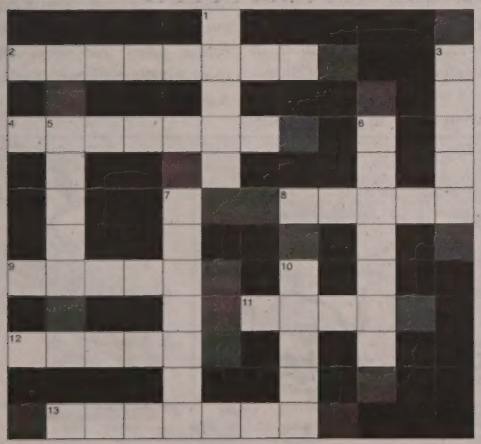
Students also see the value in producing their own work instead of using material from ChatGPT, as an overreliance on the chatbot may cause a deterioration in the student's skills.

"Students should take creative freedom in their writing and not take ideas only from the AI and not think for themselves," Hang said.

While ChatGPT has proven to have some value, in the context of the classroom, students will use it in ways that harm their education. Simply put, the cons outweigh the pros.

"Any time that you use a machine's words in order to convey your own thoughts, it's going to start getting very dangerous," Muse said.

Fun Page Crossword



ACROSS

2 Now that P.E. is back in person, the department is trying to return to its old curriculum with a focus on encouraging ____.

4 ChatGPT, a popular ____, is a large source of worry for many teachers that students may be turning in plagiarized or inauthentic work.

8 As a part of the LHS _ New Year Celebration, one of the activities the attendees could participate in was Chinese Calligraphy.(Clue to be added)

9 This individual was interviewed by Helene Bargheer for her Holocaust and Other Genocides history project.

11 Following the COVID-19 pandemic, breakfast and lunch have become _, increasing the the number of meals distributed.

12 The role of several upperclassmen, such as Tim Koh, in the LHS Visual Arts Department.

13 As of now, solar panels are located on the roof of LHS's ___ building.

DOWN

1 The Video Game Design course allows students to make a 2D game using this game engine.

3 The LexMUN conference featured this guest speaker, who is the Executive Director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University.

5 The ____ Club offered their services for free to the attendees of the SASA dance event.

6 Typically, teachers sign updated contracts every three years, however, as of now, many have worked under expired contracts for over one ___ days.

7 In attempts to become more eco-friendly and address ___ change, LHS hosts clubs and programs such as the Green Team, Envirothon, and LEAF.

10 In high school, Alicia Li attended both MIT __ Step and MIT __ Circle, where she is currently researching reinforcement learning.

Serving Love to the Community: LHS Food Service Workers

Jahnavi Bolleddula
Avni Rathi
Staff Writers

The food service workers at Lexington High School play a critical role in the school community. Not only do the cafeteria workers prepare menus and meals, but they also ensure that students and staff get adequate nutrients for a productive day of learning.

The food service workers spend most of their time at school prepping breakfast and lunch, planning menus for days ahead, and surveying students and staff once they have received their meals.

"No two days are the same. The food that we make is different every day. So how the operations run look different. It's always interesting to see what happens and figuring out different solutions to problems that may arise throughout the day," Hannah Yoo, the registered dietician and assistant manager of the Food Service Department, said.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of meals distributed has steadily increased as breakfast and lunch have become free.

"Before COVID, they were saying that we would average about 900 meals at the high school a day just for lunch, but now we're almost consistently above 1400 meals. So it's a good amount of increase," Yoo said.

Additionally, supply chain issues have been a constant challenge for the food service department in the past few years, which significantly impacts the cafeteria's meal plans. Staff must be creative to address student needs while coping with challenges.

"We have a big supply chain issue. Sometimes, your favorite chicken tenders might not be available because our supplier ran out of them and can't make them. So we have to figure out what to replace them with, what allergies may come up from different products, and the cost," Yoo said.

Yoo expresses her delight in seeing students enjoy a nutritious meal during the school day and acknowledges the importance of school-provided meals.

"It's great that the kids are eating here and that they're eating and enjoying the food. So many students get second lunches, and having a full stomach helps focus during school, like you're not worrying about what you're going to eat when you're going to eat next and instead of worrying about food, you can just worry about your classes, your friends, your extracurriculars," Yoo said.

Yoo also notes that the LHS community should support food service staff by being respectful and kind to the workers as they distribute meals to students and staff.

"If everybody can show our workers a little more grace and patience, because we are dealing with 1400 students and trying to get you guys all fed. And you know, it's not fair to some of our employees, when students give them an attitude or a hard time about their food. So if everybody could be kind to everybody, I think that would be good," Yoo said.

The School Health Advisory Council and Student Voices

William Tang
Pranav Chivukula
Staff Writers

For the past 40 years, the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) has worked tirelessly to improve the health and well-being of students at Lexington Public Schools.

SHAC is currently led by Julie Fenn, the LPS Coordinator of Health Education and Prevention, along with student co-chairs Emma Bellotte and Kavya Sasisekharan.

"The mandate of SHAC is really to be an advisory/board to the superintendent, school committee, and the school community around the health and academic success of all students. It is really through a coordinated and comprehensive approach," Fenn said.

SHAC also manages the annual Youth Risk Behaviour Survey and the Parent Academy. Their projects are currently a joint effort between the student co-chairs and Fenn, although this hasn't always been the case.

"I would say the biggest thing that we have done in the time that I have been here is to bring the student voice in more. During the council, I would bring students in with me as a prevention specialist. There were a lot of adults sitting around the room and not a lot of student representation," Fenn said.

Fenn has moved SHAC sub-committee meetings to I-Blocks to allow for more student participation. They assist the peer leadership program, allowing students to help create a healthier environment at Lexington High School.

SHAC has also started other programs in LPS, like the LGBTQ Task Force and the Substance Abuse Task Force. In addition, they have created a health committee, which unites the health departments at LHS, ranging from the health teachers to the food services.

SHAC wants to keep growing in the future, with greater student involvement being a key focus. With sub-committee meetings now being more available to the student body, SHAC hopes more students will come to participate.

"What I have been really working towards is to have more student-led and student voices within the council. You have heard all that we are doing and I can only represent the student voice to a certain extent. I need the students," Fenn said.

LHS ASU Hosts Second Lunar New Year Celebration

Jolene Cai
Taili Gao
Staff Writers

On Jan. 26, the Asian Student Union (ASU) hosted its second annual Lunar New Year celebration after school in Commons II at Lexington High School. This event was held in collaboration with AAPI staff members to promote Asian cultural awareness.

Lunar New Year is a holiday that marks the arrival of spring and the start of a new lunar calendar year. This year, the holiday began on Jan. 22. Celebrations for the Lunar New Year vary across locations and cultures.

"Even within China, there are so many different ways of celebrating; there are different traditions on what foods to eat or what to do. I feel like there's a lot of variety, but it's knowing that you get together with your family," Kayla Wang, an ASU leader, said.

All students and staff members were encouraged to join the celebration. Attendees participated in various activities, such as Chinese paper lantern making and Chinese calligraphy, and AAPI faculty gave presentations on the history of the Lunar New Year and its traditions.

"I'm mainly hoping that the Lunar New Year Celebration will bring awareness or educate students more on the importance of Asian traditions and our culture," Chuning Yang, another ASU leader, said.

With the LHS Asian student population being the greatest in number at 45.5%, many students believe that it is important for members of the school to recognize Asian culture and history.

"LHS is made up of such a large Asian student body. I feel the Lunar New Year celebration is important. In the past few years I've lived here, the Lunar New Year is definitely talked about more right now. But it's not really known yet, I just think a lot of students will appreciate at least an acknowledgment of their holiday or how families celebrate," Wang said.

Ms.Zhu helps students with the lamp-making activity.
Photo by Daniel Kim

In March, ASU will be hosting an Asian Night to continue the celebration of Asian cultures and traditions.

"I want this celebration and Asian Night to stay as Asian Student Union's 'signature' events, and I'm hoping in the future years that more and more people will participate," Yang said.

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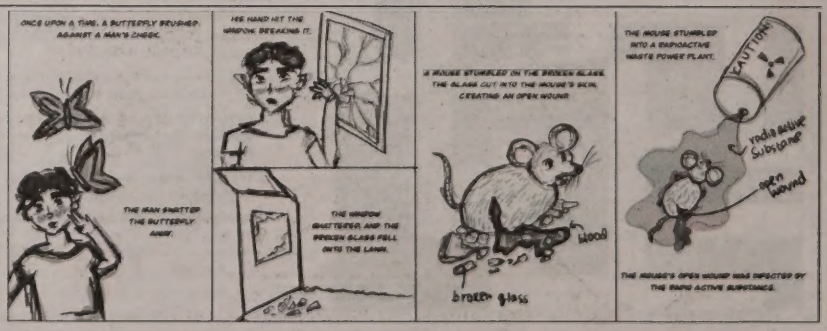


LHS Hosts LexMUN Conference

Mrigank Dhingra
Nora Kapoor
Staff Writers

On Jan. 28, Lexington High School hosted the annual LexMUN conference, where schools from all over Massachusetts gathered to debate real world issues, such as terrorism, economic crises, and international wars by simulating the United Nations. This event was the first in-person LexMUN conference since 2020.

"The first LexMUN I went to was when I was in freshman year, and we haven't had an in-person one since then, so I am pumped," Anjali Agarwal, the current co-president of the Model United Nations club, said.

Most Model UN conferences feature a special guest speaker who opens the conference. This year, Nicholas Akers, the club advisor of the Model UN club, invited Fatema Z. Sumar, the Executive Director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University.

"She's worked with many different countries all over the globe, so she's going to give really good advice on how to work in different cultures and different attitudes and religious beliefs," Akers said.

Akers believes that representing countries that students may be less familiar with teaches them to withhold their personal beliefs and emphasizes the importance of perspective and collaboration when developing potential solutions.

"[The students] have to take advantage of someone else's perspective, and by doing that, students can gain a new appreciation for other people's cultures and beliefs," Akers said. "After that, they have to practice in the debate itself where students come together, just like they do in the real world, to work together to find a solution to the problem."

A Model UN conference typically lasts the entire day, starting with an opening ceremony followed by committee sessions and ending with a closing ceremony.

"If you're a participant, what you do is research what your country or your position is and you get ready to debate," Agarwal said.

Not only does this experience provide students with the opportunity to develop their individual skills, but it also promotes cooperation between delegates. Working together to write resolutions or crisis directives to address rising problems exposes students to different perspectives which can often be applied to the real-world.

"It's about collaborating and writing and researching, but at its core, it's about projecting your voice and your ideas and being able to communicate them in a way that is authentic, polarizing, and promotes collaboration," Agarwal said.

Sustainability: A Community Effort

Aditya Chiduruppa
Siya Setty
Staff Writers

Since 2016, Lexington High School has had plans to install solar panels on the roof of the buildings as part of a larger effort to make Lexington Public Schools more environmentally friendly. As of now, solar panels are located on the roof of LHS's science building and power parts of the school's electricity and heating systems.

"That was actually something that was done in conjunction with some municipal organizations, the town manager and such," Dr. Andrew Stephens, the principal of LHS, said.

The initiative was spearheaded by the facilities department and is the latest in a series of several changes that have been made at LHS - the most influential being the composting and recycling project.

"There was a push to make sure that our cutlery and the things that kids were utilizing, were able to be recycled, or composted. That wasn't the case when I first got here, because [we used] plastic forks and knives, so there's been a lot of movement in that particular area," Stephens said.

A notable example of how LPS has been working towards reducing our carbon footprint is the renovation of Maria Hastings Elementary School.

"Sustainability was considered as a key priority. [Hastings] has a geothermal system for heating and cooling and solar panels," Atreyi Basu, a member of Sustainable Lexington Youth - a subcommittee of the Sustainable Lexington Committee (SLC), said.

In addition to these renovations, Lexington as a town continues to organize various other measures to habitualize greener practices. Currently, SLC is working on a number of initiatives, such as creating a Climate Action and Resilience plan and issuing a statement of concern surrounding Lexington's trees.

"We've gotten our instagram account up and running, endorsed the Statement of Concern on Lexington's Trees, and have a few projects slated to begin soon, including a collaboration with the library," Basu said.

Through such projects, the SLC hopes to raise awareness for their causes. For instance, they want to start holding educational workshops for Lexington youth.

"There's been a number of successful initiatives, like the Community Choice program, Lex Drive Electric program, LexSORT, and Lexington has committed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050," Basu said.

As for LHS, progress can only be achieved with a community effort. Stephens believes that students should take up responsibilities within the community to build a greener Lexington.

"[Student volunteers] are having a tremendous intangible effect," Stephens said.

South Asian Student Association Dance Event Jan. 20

Anagha Chakravarti
Sejal Mammai
Staff Writers

After a year of planning, Lexington High School's South Asian Student Association (SASA) held their first dance event at the Lexington Community Center on Jan. 20.

SASA's debut event incorporated elements of South Asian culture through the event's food, music, dancing, and games. The program incorporated various LHS clubs, including performances from RASA, LHS' classical dance group, and LHS' Bollywood dance group. Additionally, the Henna Club offered free henna to attendees.

"I enjoyed being able to embrace my culture with people from similar cultural backgrounds. I enjoy being able to do other people's henna and seeing other people just enjoy themselves and have a fun time," Abhinav Chaudry, one of the leaders of the Henna club, said.

SASA was created to recognize the need for South Asian cultural representation at LHS. Led by LHS teachers Dr. Parul Kumar and Rohen Sundaram, the club represents the diverse South Asian perspectives within the school community.

"Within LHS specifically, cultural representation is very important because there is such a plethora in student culture and diversity," Saanvi Mammai, a leader of SASA, said. "Everyone's ideas and cultures should be shared."

Participants at the event valued the opportunity to immerse themselves in South Asian culture.

"Cultural representation is important so that people feel like they have a safe space where they can just be themselves and not live in fear of judgment from others," Chaudry said.

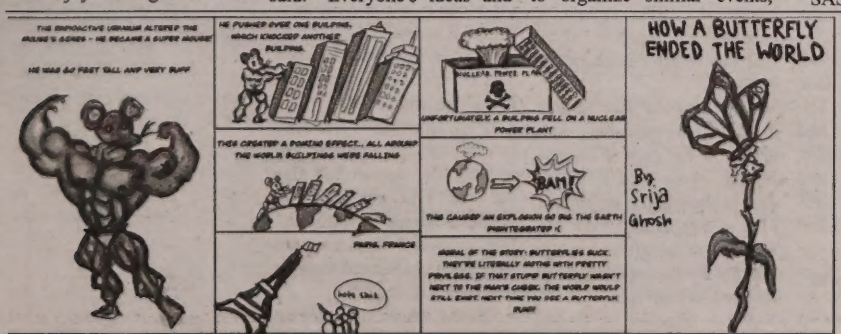
While SASA aims to create a space where South Asian students can celebrate their culture, their mission impacts the broader LHS community.

"There were people that weren't South Asian that were at the SASA dance event, and they just got to learn more about South Asian culture," Chaudry said.

In the future, SASA plans to organize similar events, such as another Bollywood dance night and an event for Holi, the festival of color.

SASA believes that these events further cultural awareness among the student body in LHS.

Bollywood Dance Team after their first performance at the SASA Dance \ RASA dancers perform at the SASA Dance.
Photo by Daniel Kim



Questions? Comments?
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Creating Community - The LHS Art Department

Allison Ma
Laura Yang
Staff Writers

Through diverse visual art courses and experienced teachers, Lexington High School's Art Department helps students explore different mediums and find their art interests.

LHS offers a wide range of support and resources for students.

"We have eleven specialized art teachers and seven studio spaces including dedicated spaces for wheel-thrown ceramics, video production, digital art computer labs, film photography, sculpture, and traditional 2D media," Ashley Grant, an art teacher, said.

Throughout the years, the Art Department has developed new course offerings based on student interests.

"We have been working hard to create courses that students want. Things like Graphic Design, Video Game Design, and AP Art Studio were recently added in direct response to student feedback," Alethea Roy, the K-12 Coordinator of Visual Arts, said.

Students appreciate LHS's art offerings and the benefits they bring, such as creative and experimental freedom.

"You have so much creative liberty with everything that there's no way to go wrong when you take an art class at LHS," Elaina Li, a sophomore, said.

Teachers also share their personal experiences in the art field with students who wish to pursue art after high school.

"Just talking about the arts in general, what [my teacher] majored in, her experiences in the field, as well as how she saw people get established as artists [was helpful]. I think it's really cool that a lot of teachers at LHS have that kind of experience that they can share with students," Li said.

Another factor of the Art Department's success is the passion of its teachers. Teachers often go out of their way to help students with their art by offering studio space for those working on independent projects and sharing information about creative opportunities outside of school.

One offering, for example, allows students interested in building a portfolio for college to drop by Room 214 on Tuesdays from 3:30 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. starting Feb. for Roy's Portfolio Drop-in Tuesdays. This allows students to obtain studio time, portfolio evaluations, and after-school support.

The Art Department has created a thriving creative community at LHS, allowing students to excel in their artistic efforts.

"The students are incredible and I love my colleagues and it feels like home here. It is a place I can collaborate, create, and learn alongside my students and coworkers. LPS is truly a source of inspiration and fuels the lifelong learner in me," Roy said.

LHS' Newest Art Course: Video Game Design

Daniel Xu
Toshio Yuki
Staff Writers

The 2022-2023 Program of Studies at Lexington High School features a new semester-long visual arts course: Video Game Design. This course allows students to work together as a team making a 2D game using the game engine Godot.

The course was proposed by Rachael Tadeu, a current art teacher at LHS, who has always had a passion for playing video games and teaching students.

"I wanted to be a teacher, I want to do video game design. For me, it's a dream come true to be actually able to teach video game design to high schoolers," Tadeu said.

Once getting the proposal approved by the visual art coordinator, Alethea Roy, Tadeu then spent over 300 hours during the summer creating a school-appropriate curriculum from scratch.

"It's a lot of online research. I bought a lot of books, watched the videos, trying to figure out what software we should use. That was a really long process of trying to get the software … I think my biggest task is taking everything that I know and making it so that students can understand it," Tadeu said.

As expected in a course's debut, obstacles arose. In particular, issues regarding the timing of lessons.

"The biggest problem that I had from the first semester is I tried frontloading most of the lessons before we started creating the game together. Unfortunately, by the time the students needed most of the information, they already forgot about it," Tadeu said.

This slowed down the production of the game, leaving Tadeu no time to show her classes the artistic elements of video games, meaning that students were unable to effectively incorporate these into their project.

"I had also planned to teach art theories and principles related to video games after we started making the game, but at that point it would have slowed the team down too much and wouldn't be related to everyone as half of the students were mostly working on mechanics and not art," Tadeu said.

Tadeu plans to address these shortcomings by rearranging the order she plans to teach certain elements of this course.

"For [the second] semester, I am shifting everything around, starting out with learning art then going straight into brainstorming for the game and then teaching mechanics and how to use Godot as we are building the game so that it is being taught as they need it rather than before," Tadeu said.

During the big project, each student had a different contributing role in the development process, and in the end combined everything to create a well-functioning game. For example, junior Mateus dos Santos worked on the art in the building project group.

"I was in the story building. We came up with a bunch of ideas for how the game was going to look. Then throughout the last few weeks [of the semester], we were just working on building our levels, putting them together, and making it so that you can finish one level and go to the next," dos Santos said.

However, issues with dividing up the roles arose when the final project was being made. Additionally, many students felt there was an insufficient amount of time given to complete the project.

"[I would have liked] more time to work on our levels and more divided work, because there were some people in the art group, some people that were in the mechanics group, and then some people that are just in the middle that weren't really doing much," dos Santos said.

Despite these setbacks, the course's collaborative nature contributed to one of dos Santos's most memorable experiences from this class: developing the teamwork skills necessary to create a well-functioning video game.

So far, the course has gone through adventurous ups and downs. Overall, both beginner and experienced students seem to enjoy the new class and appreciate the effort Tadeu has put into the course.

"I already had an attraction to the idea of [this course], but even for people that don't play video games as much, it's definitely something that you can learn from because you will learn [about] components of a business in general, the parts you have to work on, how much communication it needs," dos Santos said.

Student Engagement and Faculty Assistance: LHS Art TAs

Janya Utkarsh
Staff Writers

At Lexington High School, a great emphasis is placed on the Visual Arts Department. Classes ranging from ceramics to video game design, are part of a larger selection that allow students to explore different artistic styles. Students can pursue independent study in visual arts, enroll in advanced and honors level classes, and even take Advanced Placement Art Studio.

Outside of completing visual arts courses, upperclassmen students can also apply as a Teaching Assistant (TA). TAs in the art department help out in a number of ways depending on the teacher and course. To apply to be an art TA, students must have successfully completed the Foundations of Fine Art or Foundations of Digital Art course, three additional Fine Art courses, and receive permission from the instructor of the class and the Visual Arts department head.

"I am expected to give advice to current students, look over portfolios (artistic critique, formatting text and slides), help clean the studio, take reference photos, and document the student's process," Tim Koh, a senior and AP Art Studio TA, said.

TAs, including Koh, discuss and agree on their responsibilities with the teacher whose class they help with.

"Tim sits with the student and discusses ways the student could improve documentation, formatting of their images, and ways of including synthesis of materials to match their chosen topic," Ashley Grant, a visual arts teacher at LHS, said.

Many art teachers agree that TAs in art classes are invaluable.

"Teaching AP Art without a TA, while possible, does not allow for each student to receive immediate feedback during the same class time… [Tim's] suggestions may differ from mine, giving greater options for the work to move forward," Grant said.

Art educator Jessica Khamarji agrees with this sentiment.

"Students are able to feel more supported and are offered a different perspective when TAs are present… This is especially true since TAs have taken the class before, and have a good understanding of the rubric and expectations," Khamarji said.

Notably, both students and TAs benefit from interactions in the classroom.

"Peer teaching is not only helpful for the students receiving the support but also the TA. TAs are asked to frame feedback in constructive ways that they may not have been challenged to do in the past," Grant said.

On the whole, TAs are an invaluable part of the Art Classrooms at LHS. In turn, TAs find joy in assisting LHS's artistic student body.

"The students are the best part. They're all so hardworking and talented. I can get to know each student's work and vision. It's great to gain inspiration on the artistic process," Koh said.

STEM Profile: Alicia Li

Felix Cao
Ryan Qin
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Lexington High School senior Alicia Li will graduate this year having demonstrated a strong passion and aptitude for math through her coursework and extracurricular activities at LHS.

Li has been involved in math since elementary school, when she first started attending competitions.

"Something I really like about math is, to me, it's very beautiful, in a sense that it's just so elegant, and when you see a good proof, it's so satisfying, especially when you solve a very challenging problem. It's the best feeling in the entire world," Li said.

During Li's time at LHS, she actively attended math competitions, including the American Mathematics Competition (AMC) 10 and 12, one of the biggest math competitions in the United States with more than 300,000 yearly participants.

"I qualified for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) five times, and then I qualified for the Math Prize for Girls three times," Li said.

Not only has Li been an active participant in competitions, but she has also engaged in research related to math. She attended MIT Prime Step and MIT Prime Circle, where she is currently researching reinforcement learning.

"I was a part of MIT Prime Step for two years, in eighth and ninth grade. MIT Prime Step is a program for math research. I've also been involved with MIT Prime Circle which is a reading group, so I studied the theory of computation then," Li says.

Additionally, Li has attended Math Team for several years. Li considers the welcoming and inclusive community a second home, where she can pursue math alongside similarly dedicated, passionate classmates.

"Math team is almost like my second family. They're just such a great group of people. We're all very supportive of each other. It's really great there," Li said.

For students looking to get more involved in math, Li advises them to have a genuine interest in it and pursue it for their own interests.

"Definitely be involved in the math team because it is such a great community with a lot of brilliant and also supportive people. Don't let anyone tell you you're bad at math. Don't compare yourself to others, because it's not really productive, and make sure you're doing math because you like it, not because your parents are telling you to," Li said.

Senior Alicia Li
Photo by Daniel Kim

Discussing the 2022 LHS Science Fair with Junu Lee

Ella Li
Lillian Yang
Staff Writers

Every year, the Lexington High School Science Department holds a school-wide science fair that allows students to pursue independent research projects based on their interests.

"The Lexington High School science fair is always the week before February vacation. That allows students that qualify to advance to the state science fair and go from there," Reginald Hobbs, the LHS science department head, said.

Last year, Junu Lee went on to qualify for the state fair and the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), which took place in Dallas, Texas. Regeneron ISEF is one of the world's largest high school STEM competitions, and students worldwide participate.

"Once I got to the international stage, it was really eye opening and also really humbling at the same time, because you have people from all over the world doing all different types of projects, and they're all in high school, but they're doing it at a graduate level," Lee said.

Though LHS has held a science fair for many years, several major changes have occurred. In previous years, all students who took an Advanced Placement (AP) science course were required to participate in the science fair to showcase evidence of their independent research. However, the Science Department has removed this requirement and instead made it an optional project.

"I think we were at a max of 400-500 [participants] at one point. But now, I think in a given year, we're between 30 and 50 participants and 20 to 30 projects," Hobbs said.

A decrease in the number of participants may have been influenced by the amount of dedication required to complete an independent research project.

"If I were to estimate, my first project took 400 plus hours. It's a daily commitment, adding on a little by little onto your project every day. Obviously, for most people doing science fair, to get a completed project, you don't have to put in that many hours, but to go to a depth that you think you'd do well in a competition you have to put in that much work," Lee said.

Although completing a well-crafted project for the science fair takes a lot of hard work, the effort pays off in the long run by providing students with opportunities to explore diverse topics in science.

"I think the goal is to provide students an opportunity to do independent research, to explore something that they have an interest or a passion [in]. For me, the best part of the whole process and the paperwork, is the excitement that our participants have in presenting their work," Hobbs said.

This year, the science fair took place on Feb. 15, and students were satisfied presenting their research projects.

"It's really fulfilling to see a project go from start to finish and knowing that you worked your hardest on it, so I think the sense of fulfillment that comes with finishing a project that you started is the best feeling," Lee said.

Junu Lee presents his science fair project.
Photo by Vikram Anantha

STEM, Sports, and the Shared Qualities Between

Disha Sankholkar
Sarah Chen
Staff Writers

Although teamwork is commonly associated with sports teams, it is also an integral part of STEM teams. Two Bits and a Byte is a robotics team at Lexington High School which takes part in the First Tech Challenge (FTC) robotics competition.

"Like sports teams, STEM teams like Two Bits and a Byte meet consistently, put in dedication, and practice teamwork," Maggie Zhu, a member of Two Bits and A Byte, said.

Membership requires a high time commitment, as club meetings are held four days a week after school from Tuesday to Friday.

"Every meeting is around 2 hours, however we have longer meetings on days leading up to competitions. Sometimes team members also work outside of arranged meeting times in order to meet goals and deadlines," Zhu said.

This is not only true for the robotics teams. Kira Tang, captain of the LHS Math Team and National Science Bowl (NSB) teams, shared similar experiences to Zhu regarding competition preparation.

"I would say that members spend a lot of time honing their knowledge and skills on their own. Practices are really a place to collaborate and build off of each other's ideas and problem solving methods," Tang said.

Besides hard work and dedication, STEM and athletics teams also need to develop strong collaboration skills among members.

"I think STEM teams and sports teams need the same kinds of humility and trust in order to succeed," Tang said. "It's a game-changer to have team members who appreciate each other, strive to find a middle ground, and take the task at hand seriously."

Both Zhu and Tang share common beliefs regarding how being part of a STEM team taught them the importance of working together.

"Team competitions are all about communication—being able to ask each other questions and collaborate in a way that values each individual voice and perspective," Tang said.

Ultimately, both STEM and athletic teams depend on the effort of every member to overcome challenges and excel in their respective fields.

"I've learned being a part of a team is more than just winning--it requires cooperation, communication between team members. Only a team which works together well can have a chance at reaching their potential," Zhu said.

Goals and Grit: Recruited Athletes Jayden Bai & Lauren Martin

Atreya Mallanna
Samay Shah
Staff Writers

Last fall, Lexington High School seniors Jayden Bai and Lauren Martin underwent a long college recruiting journey.

Bai, a track and field athlete committed to Emory University, discussed the importance of junior year in the recruiting process.

"I was a relatively late bloomer. I didn't perform at a competitive level until the spring of my junior year. I got my first college letter in the winter, but after I placed at states and made it to bigger meets, I started receiving a lot more letters," Bai said.

Martin, a softball player committed to Lesley University, corroborated Bai's experience.

"It mainly started in junior year, and that's when I started reaching out to coaches, emailing back and forth, and being active on social media because that's where coaches see you," Martin said.

To reduce his stress levels and gain a diverse skill set, Bai competed in a variety of track and field events.

"I think what helps me stand out is my flexibility over different events. I run the hurdle events but I also have scored points for the team in the 4x400m, 4x200m, high jump, and pretty much all the sprint events," Bai said.

In addition to versatility, Martin emphasized the importance of self evaluation, rather than external factors, such as what college recruiters think.

"If I'm just playing in the game and not worry about [recruiting], that's where I play hard and focused and do well, but if you're worried about what college coaches are there and stressing out every single time you're gonna make a play or do something well, then it's just going to mess up your head and not go as well as you hope," Martin said.

These strategies helped Bai and Martin manage the recruiting process effectively last fall. Now that they have been recruited, they recognize the importance of committing to the process.

"A highlight was finally it being over and knowing that my hard work has paid off, and I actually achieved something while doing it," Martin said.

Looking back, these student-athletes stress the importance of staying determined and goal-oriented during their high school athletics journey.

"My best piece of advice is to set your goals and stick to them. The first step to attaining goals is to truly believe in them, which is something that had framed the way that I approached each race I ran. It means that athletes will sometimes have to put their head down and practice their craft," Bai said.

Jayden Bai holds the baton as he finishes his lap in a rally race.
Photo Provided by Outside Source

Behind the Scenes of the LHS Indoor Track Team

Nolan An
Sophia Zhang
Staff Writers

Amid the 2023 indoor track season, the Lexington High School track team is training hard and competing. Each week is packed with five two-hour practices and a meet. As the team enters its invitational season, schedules have become even busier. Judging by the record-breaking scores, supporters have much to celebrate, but few know the hard work and discipline going on behind the scenes to gain these victories.

"You're only going to get as much out of it as you put into it. Track is a really demanding sport, but if you really apply yourself and you work hard, and you push through those hard workouts, you're going to be really happy about your progress," Katie Atkins, a pole vaulter and hurdler, said.

Although many may recognize the physical feats that come with the sports, what is lesser known is the degree of mental concentration required to succeed.

"It's not just running your fastest or jumping your highest. You have to get yourself to go the fastest you can. Especially in hurdles, it's so weird to be running full speed at a stationary object. Being able to flip a switch in your head like 'I'm just going to go for it; I'm just going to do it' is the hardest part," Atkins said.

Setbacks, while not ideal, are essential to growing as an athlete.

"It's just agonizing pain seeing multiple throws or lifts not going well. But as long as you persevere and be really patient with the process, good things will happen," Jack Ngo, a shot putter, said.

With so much attention placed on one's meet score, athletes may overlook the value of dedication.

"Something that we need to handle is that a number doesn't define you. It's the work that you put in that defines you as an athlete. That's a lesson that all the athletes on our team really have to go through," Jayden Bai, a sprinter and hurdler, said.

Each team member contributes to the strong indoor track community, which has helped foster a supportive and exciting environment at practice and meets.

"I have motivating teammates all around me, and that never really changes. They're there to celebrate your successes with you after competitions or meets, and they're also there to help you when you're not feeling great. There's always someone there lifting you up at practice and checking in on you, and that's something great about the team," Ava Criniti, a distance runner, said.

Coaches are also a key pillar of LHS's sports community.

"We see [our coaches] for two or three hours each day, [and] they end up being someone that we can talk to, even if it's not about running. I think that over time it definitely builds our relationship with them. Knowing that they want to be there for us, and are there for us, makes it easy to approach them when we need that," Criniti said.

The team's comforting yet encouraging environment creates a safe haven for the athletes.

"To me, track is an escape, and it's also the only place where I feel like I'm able to contribute. It's like I belong there," Ngo said.

Overall, indoor track is a balance of overcoming one's limits and feeling connected to others through the sport's challenges. For those looking to start their track journey at LHS, Bai, who has been competing since his freshman year, suggests remaining optimistic.

"You have to believe in yourself [and] trust that you have the strength to compete at a high level. And then if you do the work, everything else will fall into place," Bai said.

New Initiatives of LHS P.E.

Maddie Chang
Angie Tang
Staff Writers

The Physical Education department at Lexington High School strives to help students lead an active lifestyle during high school and beyond.

"Our focus is not on athletic ability or skill level but on ensuring students understand the benefits of being active and apply these skills in a way that benefits their life experience," Eamonn Sheehan, the head of the P.E. department, said.

In the past few years, the P.E. department adapted to the pandemic by providing students with online alternatives to traditional P.E. classes.

"We focused on emphasizing mini activity breaks during our classes, asking our classes to do some activity journaling, and encouraged them to develop activity routines that worked for them in their particular setting and to take opportunities for activity breaks," Sheehan said.

Now that P.E. is back in person, the department is trying to return to its old curriculum with a focus on encouraging teamwork and collaboration.

"We modified the curriculum to focus more on what you can do in a group… We asked kids what they would feel comfortable trying or not trying, and as things started to change and evolve with everything that was going on, we could go back to our traditional curriculum," Josh Sideman, a P.E. and adapted P.E. teacher at LHS, said.

This year, P.E. has returned to its pre-pandemic state as activities reopen and students interact more with their teachers and peers. However, the P.E. department is still looking to improve their curriculum.

"Our focus as a department is continuous improvement and it's about taking opportunities to review what we are offering to our students and make the adjustments to make our units the best and most relevant they can be," Sheehan said.

Student feedback is extremely important to the LHS P.E. department. Curriculum courses are decided based on student surveys, and pilot classes are often run to test different offerings.

"We do student surveys, see what kids want, try what kids like. If we feel as a department that it is something we can go with, we'll pilot it for a semester," Sideman said.

Next year, there are plans to change P.E. course offerings. Instead of courses such as "volleyball and badminton" or "yoga and pilates" where students spend a whole semester on one activity, P.E. classes will cover broader topics such as "collaborative P.E." or "competitive P.E."

This new initiative is the result of collaboration within the P.E. department.

"It's nice when you can bounce ideas off each other… there are a lot more distractions these days," Sideman said.

By recognizing the impacts of the pandemic, the LHS P.E. department's changes display the importance of a diverse and flexible curriculum that can accommodate student interests, while addressing potential future challenges.

P.E. teachers Mr. Sideman and Mr. Pagliuca stand together as they teach their classes the basics of volleyball.
Photo by Daniel Carreno